

Remarks

Claims 1-55 are pending. Claims 1, 4-12, 15-31, 34-50, and 52-55 are rejected. Claims 2-3, 13-14, 32-33, and 51 are objected to, but contain allowable subject matter. Claims 3, 14, 33, and 51 are cancelled by this amendment. Claims 1, 12, 31, and 48 are amended by this amendment. Applicant respectfully requests allowance of claims 1-2, 4-13, 15-32, 34-50, and 52-55.

Applicant has previously provided three separate Information Disclosure Statements to the Patent Office (dated 6/12/00, 8/8/01, and 9/19/02). The 9/19/02 IDS was provided a second time by fax. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner return the executed 1449 forms for these IDS submissions.

The drawings are objected to, and a proposed change to the drawings in enclosed to overcome the objection.

Claims 1, 4-12, 15-31, 34-50, and 52-55 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent Application Publication 2001/0017861. The recent Office Action indicates that claims 2-3, 13-14, 32-33, and 51 are objected to, but contain allowable subject matter. The allowable subject matter of claims 3, 14, 33, and 51 has been incorporated into their respective independent claims 1, 12, 31, and 48, and thus, all independent claims now contain allowable subject matter. The rejection can be withdrawn.

Applicants submit that there are additional reasons in support of patentability, but that such reasons are moot in light of the above remarks and are omitted in the interests of brevity. Applicant reserves the right to pursue claims in continuation applications that are broader than or different from those presented in this application without prejudice or estoppel arising from the acceptance of currently allowable subject matter in this application.

Applicant respectfully requests allowance of claims 1-2, 4-13, 15-32, 34-50, and 52-55.


SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

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